Jan: 9th 1829
295 Market

Dr Jamie No 164

Passed March 1829

An Inaugural Essay on Dysentery

By

Henry K. Jones of Virginia

January 8th 1829

Jan 29 1891

Dysentery is a disease of such general prevalence in our country, and its importance from constituting one of the great outlets of human life is so universally admitted, I deem it unnecessary to offer any introductory remarks, and shall therefore proceed at once to the consideration of the subject.

This is a disease in which there is inflammation of the mucous membrane of the intestines, accompanied with frequent mucus and often bloody evacuations, griping pains, tenesmus, and fever; the stools are generally frequent and small in quantity, the natural feces being for the most part retained, but they do sometimes make their appearance and are generally found mixed with the mucus evacuations in small, hard, compact substances, and known by the name of scybala.

Causes

There are many which have at different times been alleged productive of this disease, but as it is not my intention to enter into a minute investigation,

I shall extend my inquiries as to the causes ~~to~~ of it, to a limited extent, and shall be content by mentioning only a few, which time and the experience of our ablest writers, and most successful practitioners, have found to be correct.

Among the first, and perhaps the one by which it is most frequently excited, may be mentioned marsh miasmata, and all such as are productive of our common autumnal fevers.

It is sometimes caused from acrid substances taken into the stomach, as bad flour, sour wine, unripe fruit and many other articles; and has not unfrequently been known to prevail as an epidemic, depending, perhaps, like some other diseases, on some unknown peculiar distemperature of the atmosphere.

It may be caused by the sensible qualities of the air, as cold suddenly alternating with excessive heat, moisture succeeding to dryness, and frequently

checked perspiration; this latter occasioned by the various vicissitudes of the weather, or by plunging in a cold bath while in a profuse perspiration. Filth may be mentioned as another one of the causes, but its peculiar effect on the alimentary canal has never yet, as far as my limited research has enabled me to ascertain, been satisfactorily accounted for.

There are several forms of Dysentery, as Acute, Chronic, Typhoid, &c but the few remarks I shall offer will be confined to the Acute inflammatory form of the disease.

This disease may sometimes be mistaken for Diarrhoea, but by a careful examination and strict inquiries into the symptoms, they may in most cases be readily distinguished; but the mildest forms of Dysentery and the most aggravated forms of Diarrhoea cannot, without some difficulty, be distinguished by our most successful Practitioners, so much alike

are they in many of their characteristic symptoms. We may select the following, which are a few of the distinguishing marks as laid down by authors: Diarrhoea is scarcely ever accompanied by so much fever or inflammation, the termina and tenesmus never so distressing, the evacuations though not always natural, are never found so much intermixed with blood or mucus, the stools are less frequent, and found generally in larger quantities

Symptoms

Patients labouring under this disease are not always attacked in the same way; in some instances we find the termina and tenesmus, with frequent mucus or bloody stools, the first symptom of the disease; in others, it first, and most generally comes on with cold shiverings and other symptoms of pyrexia succeeded by quick pulse, skin hot and dry, furred tongue, hurried respiration, and in a short time after, all the above enumerated

[illegible] sometimes [illegible] its appearance [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

It often terminates in a few days, though sometimes is protracted to weeks and even months; it then assumes the chronic form, and demands a somewhat different plan of treatment.

This disease may terminate in several different ways, in chronic Dysentery, in Diarrhoea, in Rheumatism, Dropsy, Tetanus, or Gangrene.

The favorable signs are, the gradual cessation of all the enumerated distressing symptoms, pulse becoming slower, softer, more regular and gradually approaching nearer its natural standard, skin moist, the stools assuming more natural, and expressed with less tenesmus and straining: the unfavorable, as the evacuations running more frequently, more mixed with blood and sometimes resembling the washings of putrid flesh, abdomen loose, weak, quick, and intermitting pulse, haggard countenance, cold clammy perspiration, restlessness, petechia,

inquietas, a squeaking voice, and cold extremities. Patients, however have been known to recover after labouring under many of these distressing and alarming symptoms.

Treatment.

Perhaps there is no disease more completely under our control, or that will sooner yield to judicious management, than this.

We should in this, as in every other case which demands our attention, be governed by the state of the pulse, the severity of the pain, and other existing symptoms. If the pulse be quick, full, and strong, denoting considerable inflammation, the free use of the lancet should precede every other remedy, and it should be repeated as often as indicated by the state of the pulse, and the degree of inflammation. Dr Rush mentions he has in the same patient, bled in this disease from one to twenty.

times with perfect success; but I think that generally in the ordinary forms of the common acute inflammatory stage, venesection will scarcely ever be necessary oftener than from one to four or five times; and Dr Physick, than whom we need not ask better authority, thinks one bleeding will in very many cases be found sufficient, if carried so far as to make a decided and permanent impression on the disease. Too however, much blood should be taken, and the necessity for its repetition will then depend entirely on the existing symptoms.

Emetics have been [illegible] recommended [illegible], and it is [illegible] Professor Chapman [illegible] [illegible] vomiting of [illegible] matter, [illegible] circumstances in [illegible] [illegible], and [illegible]

to be proved.

But if [illegible] sympathetic [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

can be found better than a combination of Ipecac, Calomel, and Opium; is composed in tolerable solution, unless the [illegible] at the same time with [illegible] [illegible], and if a more powerful preparation be desired, Dover's powder will be found rather acceptable, Ipecac combined with Opium will relieve the [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] medicine. The preparations of Antimony have been here spoken of [illegible] [illegible] to the disease, [illegible] should not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] be [illegible] of a preference to the above mentioned combinations; nothing will be found to assist the diaphoretic effect of the medicine, and relieve at the same time the [illegible] which commonly exist, as flannels, several times folded, wrung out of warm water and applied to the abdomen, or which will be found preferable.

[illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

and of the same size as the blister; in this it would be more beneficial to have it sufficiently large to cover the greater part of the abdomen. When blisters are resorted to in the pelvic viscera, more than one should be kept perfectly open. The herpes of pleurisy, for even risen, proceed to slight suppuration, would fatigue and weaken him more.

If a tube for hemorrhoids, a bad pain, pieces of leather, or any other dry cloth should be placed under him to receive the discharges, and by this means, which is generally necessary, the blisters would not be so troublesome to the patient as I have imagined.

Semicircular [illegible] of linseed are usually helpful, the bels powder, and much mixed with blood, and the [illegible] conditions be fugax [illegible] heat in combination with pleura and lungs may be used with great advantage. In [illegible] the

[illegible] form and as a [illegible] to the form of a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

closed the scene.

Our post mortem examinations plainly show the cause of the great suffering of our patients when living; and bring fully to our mind the great disposition of the mucous coat of the intestines & to take on inflammation, and all its consequences, for not unfrequently we see great marks of inflammation throughout the entire alimentary canal involving often the peritoneum – and the liver in very many cases to have suffered no little structural derangement, all suffering from inflammation. erosion. contraction scirhosities and mortification. ———